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MEMOIR

OF THE

LIFE AND RELIGIOUS EXERCISES

OF

REBECCA B. THOMPSON,

A

MINISTER IN THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS;

BY

HER HUSBAND.



PHILADELPHIA:

MERRIHEW & SON, PRINTERS,

No. 243 Arch Street.

1866.



MEMOIR.

I have long felt a duty incumbent upon me to give forth, for the benefit of others, some account of the life, religious exercises and labors of my beloved wife, Rebecca B. Thompson. Although by some she may have been considered one of the little ones,—even as the hindmost of the Father's flock,—yet I have felt that some record of her dedication to the will of her Divine Master, and her humble, unobtrusive walking through life, may be an incentive to us, her survivors, to press forward with renewed diligence, to make our “calling and election sure;” that we may attain even to

such a degree of religious experience, that when the "last sands of life are fast ebbing away," we may feel, as she did, a spirit of quiet resignation to the Divine will in all things. This duty seems the more imperative upon me, knowing that she had a concern and engagement of mind to hand down to posterity some account of the gracious dealings, fatherly care, and protection over her, of "Israel's unslumbering shepherd." This she has given, in a little narrative written some twelve years prior to her decease, comprising some of the most prominent incidents in her life, as they occurred from early childhood up to near the time of her marriage; and as this is, perhaps, a more reliable history of that portion of her life than can now be written, I give it in her own plain, simple language, *to wit* :

"From an impression which has, from early youth, accompanied my mind, that at some proper time it would be right for me

to show forth to others the gracious kindness and condescension of my heavenly Father towards me, a poor worm of the dust, I shall now endeavor, with as much accuracy as events and times, which can now only be recalled by memory, and the assistance of Him whose goodness and power I wish to commemorate, to pen down whatever may seem to arise as being worthy of preservation; hoping it may be useful to some into whose hands it may chance to fall, and afford renewed evidence of the unsearchable wisdom and watchful care of the great Shepherd of Israel, who sleepeth not by day, nor slumbereth by night; and who hath said, the very hairs of your heads are numbered, and that not even a sparrow shall fall to the ground without his notice; and are not ye of more value than many sparrows?

“My parents, Cyrus and Rachel Barnard, (formerly Wilson,) were respectable

and valuable Friends, adorning the religion they professed, by their dedication and faithful walking before its author; and were, beyond a doubt, useful instruments in His holy hand, in gathering many to righteousness. My mother, I think in her twentieth year, was enabled to confess Christ before men, by publicly opening her mouth in the assemblies of His people; and, by taking heed to the trust committed to her, became an acknowledged minister in Society. In the exercise of this gift she travelled extensively, much in the unity of her friends, both at home and abroad; and, indeed, so much was her time occupied in the discharge of this duty, and her decease having taken place when I was between six and seven years of age, it seems as though I could never retain a distinct recollection of her; but that which I have gathered from the testimony of others, is truly precious, and has often proved a cordial to my

feelings, and an incentive to endeavor to follow her as she was concerned to follow Christ. One of her expressions upon her deathbed, which is brought before the view of my mind at this time, was her concern for those who dwelt at ease in their 'ceiled houses,' and her sympathy for the rightly exercised. Having been strengthened and enabled to perform the work appointed her, she was, I doubt not, gathered to rest from her arduous labors, in the forty-second year of her age.

“My father, who survived her about seven years, possessed a meek and quiet spirit, and was generally beloved wherever he was known, by all classes of persons; for in him the worthy and respectable found a companion, the poor and distressed a sympathising friend and counsellor, and who often obtained shelter under his hospitable roof. His sickness, which was of several months' continuance, he endured

with much patience. Although I was young, I was much with him, and never remember to have heard a murmur escape his lips, although his sufferings were, I believe, great at times ; while the prospect of an ultimate dissolution, and leaving three young orphan children, (of whom I was the eldest,) exposed to the many snares and temptations which surround the youth, was a trial which no doubt exercised his sensitive mind, and caused him to seek for strength from the arm of power, which he had learned to lean upon, not only in seasons of affliction, but in prosperity. That it was granted him, may be inferred from the composure with which he had his two surviving children summoned to his bedside, to give them his last benediction ; believing, as he expressed it, that He who numbered the hairs of our heads, and watched over the sparrows, so that not one of them fell to the ground without His no-

tice, would watch over and care for us ;— and I feel bound on this occasion to testify to the truth of the promise, believing it has been verified. For, although we were thus left exposed to many and various temptations,—almost wholly without earthly protectors to train and instruct us in that which is profitable,—yet I have no hesitation in asserting that His all-seeing eye was over us, preserving us from many evils to which we were exposed.

“He was a man of considerable business, in the transaction of which he was much from home : and his family was of a character which rendered the situation of his children exposing, as regarded example ; for, as might be expected in so large a family, there were those who would not be so guarded either in conduct or conversation as would have been profitable. But I remember hearing the housekeeper say, on one occasion, in speaking of my two bro-

thers, that she had never known them to depart from the truth, or say a bad word, which she considered rather remarkable, I suppose, when she considered all the circumstances under which we were placed, and furnishes another proof that the Divine principle is implanted in each and every breast; which is capable of preserving from all evil, and which, if suffered to take root, will bring forth fruit to the honor of the great Husbandman; but if stifled in the bud by that which is evil, it will gradually become fainter and fainter, until it is wholly obscured. How necessary, therefore, for those unto whom is intrusted the great responsibility of rearing the infantile mind, that they take these things into serious consideration,—as good or bad principles, implanted while young, commonly go with us through life. My dear father was exceedingly fond of his children, and when at home, we were his companions:

for the feeling was mutual, and there was nothing like fear attached to our intercourse. On the contrary, when we expected him home, after being absent either a short or longer time, his arrival was hailed as a source of great joy; and who should be the first to meet him, and impart to him our little joys or sorrows, was a question that was settled only by our activity. How many mingled sensations of joy and sorrow do these reflections call forth! The last journey of any importance which he took was to the city of Washington, in order to obtain a patent for the invention of a machine which, it was considered, would be greatly useful in removing the large quantities of earth required in the construction of canals, &c., which at that time were claiming the attention of those around him; and having obtained it, he returned as far as Baltimore, where he

was attacked with the disease which eventually terminated his useful life.

“He was taken ill at the house of a friend and relative, where he remained some time, unable to return home. Here he was kindly attended by his friends and their physician; and word being at length received by his family, preparations were made to assist him in returning; and never while memory remains shall I forget his arrival amongst us. The carriage came to the door, and we went, as usual, to meet him; we met him in the yard,—it seems now as though I could mark the spot. He was pale, with a blanket wrapped around him, for the weather was cold. The meeting was one of mingled joy and sorrow, and I turned to hide my tears. He was spared to us until about the middle of the ensuing summer, and then passed away, leaving a void in the hearts of his children and numerous friends, which time alone could fill. An aged father in

the truth bore this testimony to his worth at the time his remains were consigned to the silent grave: 'This day hath a king and a great man fallen in Israel.'

"Having given this hasty notice of my worthy parents, whose memory is so precious to me, I will proceed. I was born on the 8th of Third month, 1814. When quite young, and at school, my inclination was, during hours of relaxation, to leave my childish plays, and mingle with those much older than myself; and I well remember repeatedly being told by my playmates I would make a preacher; and I believe that it was not by way of ridicule, but on account of a predisposition to seriousness. I also remember, when attacked with illness (although nothing serious or lasting) in quite early life, an anxiety that attended my mind respecting my being in a prepared state to leave the world, should I be called upon.

"At the time of my mother's decease, I

was too young to understand the great and irreparable loss to which I was subjected ; but I well remember, when quite small, wishing father would marry again, that I might have a mother ; being fully sensible it was a great favor ; and sometimes, when among my young female companions who were thus favored, I could scarcely refrain from shedding tears, when I compared my situation with theirs ; for, oh, I felt it was indeed a privilege of which I was denied ; and that all who enjoy it may duly prize it, for there is an accountability attached to it which many do not feel until they are deprived of it ; then, if they have slighted their counsel and pious concern for them, it will hang as a mill-stone around their necks. Let all ponder these things.

“ Soon after my father’s decease, myself and brother went to reside with my grandmother Wilson and her son, a man well advanced in years ; and she being above

seventy years of age, our opportunities for improvement were very limited. She, however, was in a few months removed by death, when the scene was again changed. In a little while I was sent to boarding-school, so that from this time brother and I were mostly separated. He was sometimes at school, and then went to learn the turning business; and it always felt to me that we sustained a great loss by being so little together. I have always thought where parents can conveniently keep their families together, (though I know it does not always seem prudent), and as much as possible cherish kind feelings for each other, that their sentiments and feelings would become blended together, and they would be mutually helpful one to another. After being at school as much as my friends thought necessary, I commenced teaching school, in which I continued occasionally until a short time before I was married. During this

period of my life I became fond of gay dress and gay young company, in which I indulged to a considerable extent, frequenting parties and places of amusement. In all this, I was followed by the Divine monitor within, although at times I almost stifled His voice; yet sometimes, when I assembled with my companions for the purpose of spending our precious time in these vanities, I wished the time was passed, and we were ready to return to our homes, secretly feeling how wrong it was thus to squander that time which was given for nobler purposes. And when I have retired to my bed, after having thus spent my time, sorrow of heart has been my portion, which I fully believe is more or less the situation of all others; although I believe we may stifle these convictions until they become almost extinct.

“ Oh! that young persons could be awak-

ened seriously to consider the responsibility which rests upon them, rightly to employ the talents given them by the great Author of 'every good and perfect gift,' and who will hold them accountable for the advantages with which he has blessed them. He does not endow them with talents capable of being greatly useful, and place them in situations in which these may be cultivated, without requiring something at their hands, by which all the glory and honor may be given unto him, and the creature be laid low in self-abasement before him.

“Much also depends upon parents and heads of families, that they in a proper manner instil these sentiments into the minds of the youth intrusted to their care,—the great object of their creation,—and the awful responsibility which rests upon them, to be attentive to the still small voice within, that will teach them what they should do and what to leave undone. I can set

my seal to the truth of the declaration that it will lead them out of all vain amusements and sinful pleasures, with which the world abounds; and as they become willing to take up the cross in these things He will be with them, and they shall become weaned from the world and the world from them. Thus they experience a living unto that which is truly valuable, for the more they become crucified to the world, the more they will be engaged to look unto their Heavenly Father, who will be their counsellor and friend; although their earthly friends may for a season forsake them, sorrow not for them. If they have Him for an instructor, they will be strengthened and enabled to journey forward with the happy assurance that having performed the part allotted them, in this state of being, they shall be gathered to rest with those who have passed from time to the enjoyment of a happy eternity.

“On the important subject of making choice of a companion for life, I was favored to see and feel that neither the rich in the things of this world, nor those who made the most showy appearance, were to be the objects of my choice, for when such opportunities presented, clouds of darkness came before me, so that that which to the outward observer might seem suitable, was controlled by His invisible power for some wise and good purpose best known to himself.”

Thus ends (rather abruptly) her narrative, which brings us up to a period near the time of our marriage, which took place in the Twelfth month, 1839, with the approbation of New Garden Monthly Meeting, and in the twenty-sixth year of her age. During the early years of our married life, although she had known of that which reproves for evil, (as evinced by her own testimony), and had felt the sweet incomes of the love of

God as the reward for well doing, yet for want of faithful obedience to the dictates of Truth in her mind, she had as yet not come forth as the acknowledged advocate for the furtherance of the cause of her dear Redeemer. Yet I believe she was accounted a sober, religious-minded young woman,—to me she was a loving and devoted wife; and, by her affectionate nature, peculiarly qualified for the ministration of those nameless little duties and attentions which tend to make the married life pleasant and happy. As a mother, she was fond and indulgent, feeling that solicitude for her offspring that a mother only can feel; yet she was keenly alive to the responsibility that attaches to a parent in the proper culture and training of those precious plants. And feeling, as she often expressed it, in times of sickness and suffering, when powerless to help ourselves, how very dependent we were upon one another for the fulfilment of those kind

offices which humanity dictates, even to smooth the couch or wipe the falling tear, these feelings often prompted her to seek the bedside of the sick and afflicted, there with her own hands to minister to their necessities; and I feel that there are those now on the busy stage of life who can look back to acts of dedication on her part, and remember her with feelings of gratitude and affection. This innate feeling, coupled with a genial affability of manners, with great deference to the sentiments and views of others, caused her to be beloved and esteemed by a large circle of neighbors and acquaintances.

But as revolving years rolled round, her health gradually declined; and, being of a naturally weak and delicate constitution, she was at times brought into much bodily suffering, which was more or less her portion for several years. It was during this time of suffering and trial that she became more

thoroughly aroused to the necessity of greater dedication on her part to the will of her divine Master, and a more thorough knowledge of his will concerning her, that thereby she might grow in grace and in favor with him, and ultimately come to know a preparation for a solemn, final change. This seemed the more imperative, as she could not look forward with much hope that her life would (at best) be lengthened out many years, but that it was held by a very slender thread. As it became her daily concern to know His will concerning her, and as obedience kept pace with knowledge, a great future was opened up before her, and she was favored to see that the axe must be laid at the root of the corrupt tree; that even our strong self-love, together with all our animal passions and propensities, must be brought into entire subjection to the Divine will.

But as one little sacrifice or duty after

another was called for, she not having attained to the "stature of the full man in Christ," for want of true dedication to the pointings of Truth, entire obedience was sometimes wanting, and His will or command not obeyed ; but the penalty for disobedience was heartfelt sorrow and lamentation ; and I have believed that none but those who have paid this penalty can truly feel for and sympathize with those tribulated ones. And all within me is melted into tenderness when I remember the hours of conflict, the almost sleepless nights, the moistened pillow, aye, and even the feeble but earnest petition to the throne of Grace, of this dear one, for preservation and for strength to obey His requirings. She was permitted to remain in this state of probation several months, wherein at times she felt the hand of the Infinite Father underneath her, and the gentle touches of His love wooing her away from a dependence

upon all outward help to become wholly His. At other times she drank of the bitter cup to its very dregs.

Her path seemed to be a narrow one. She was called, as she believed, to many little acts of duty, which, to the natural man, seemed peculiar and even simple; but in referring to them in after life, she believed them necessary in the Divine hand, to subdue her natural will, so as to be willing to become, as it were, a fool for Christ's sake. Having in a measure submitted to the turning and overturning of His holy hand, and thus learned somewhat of obedience by the things she had suffered, she was, by the love and condescension of the Infinite Father, measurably released and redeemed from this state of thralldom, for which she could ascribe thanksgiving and praise to His great name.

In the year following, to wit, 1851, she was deeply tried, and all the tender sensi-

bilities of her nature keenly awakened, in having to part with and consign to the grave a darling child, one on whom was centred a mother's love. But having learned in the school of Christ the necessity of submission to all the dispensations of Providence, and feeling, as she expressed it, that he *was too pure for earth*, and had become the recipient of the joys of heaven, she submitted thereto with becoming resignation. She had, for some time previous to this, felt, at times, that it would be right for her to make known to others the merciful dealings and long suffering kindness of a gracious God to her, (as she would express it,) a poor worm of the dust. Hence, in our religious gatherings, she sometimes felt concerned to hand forth a word of exhortation to those assembled, but on account of natural diffidence, and feeling her unworthiness, she, for a time, shrank from so weighty a ser-

vice; but being made obedient through suffering, she at length came forth in the ministry.

One of the peculiar and distinguishing traits in her character, that of having little confidence in her natural abilities, and the settled conviction on her mind of the necessity for the natural will in us to become slain, that we may come into the teachable state of the little child before we can be instructed in divine things, will be best exemplified by the introduction of the two following letters written about this time.

MILL CREEK, 10th mo. 22d, 1851.

Dear Friend:—It has been my lot to pass through a season of stripping, in which I have felt my unworthiness to ask of the Father even one crumb of soul-sustaining bread, and yet He has condescended to bless me far beyond my merit, inasmuch as He has not wholly cast me off, but has com-

manded me, as I have believed, to write what He may direct for an absent friend. "As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend;" so, also, do I believe that communications of this kind may have a tendency to stir up the pure mind by way of remembrance; for as it is the pure in spirit that shall see God, they who feel that they have none in heaven or in all the earth to look unto but Him for counsel and direction, feel, also, that none other can teach as He does, and that His mercies are new every morning; and as it has been written that "ten righteous persons might be the means of saving a city," so do I believe that the prayers of the rightly exercised, on behalf of those we love, may avail much, for He who is our author and creator is a prayer-hearing God. Had it not been so, I should have been driven from His presence as one totally unworthy of the smallest favor. Had

it not been for the secret petitions of my parents, which ascended to the throne of grace on behalf of their infant charge, which they early left to the care and protection of strangers, outwardly, yet secretly, they were watched over by the All-wise Caretaker, and preserved from many snares and temptations by which they were surrounded. And all that is within me is bowed when I reflect upon His goodness and matchless love, and the little return which I have made for these favors, for which body, soul and spirit should be given into His hands, to be converted to the purpose He designed, that of giving glory and honor to his great name, by surrendering my own will in passive obedience to His entire control, and allow the creature to lie low in self-abasement before him. This, my friend, is what He requireth of us individually, in order that we may come to know Him to be the resurrection and the

life; for when this comes to be our condition, we do His works, and there is a ceasing from man's, for what man knoweth the things of God but God and he to whom He revealeth them; and, as He is a spirit, they can only be spiritually discerned by His unspeaking voice, which must be attentively listened to, or we may not distinguish it from the voice of the stranger, and thereby fall into error, from which we may have much difficulty in freeing ourselves. But if, on the other hand, we are willing to listen to the divine monitor within, we shall come to know his power to be superior to every other power, because it can set us free from the law of sin and death,—not the death of the outward body, but that death which is produced by transgression. It is recorded, “the soul that sinneth shall die,” for, as in Adam, all shall die; showing that the animal propensities of our nature must know a death to

pass upon them in the character of the fire of the Lord, which consumes all that is light and chaffy, while that which remains may be compared to silver in a pure state, free from the dross that adhered to it when dug from the earth. That which is of the earth is earthy, and must undergo the refining process before it can become valuable in the hands of the refiner. "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver." These, then, being testimonies recorded in the Scriptures of Truth, what further evidence do we want to show that man as man can never perform the works of God? He must come to experience His spirit breathed into him, for "He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, by which he became a living soul," showing that he was passive to the operation as the clay in the hands of the potter, which resisteth not, but is fashioned and formed agreeably to the will of the maker into many different shapes, not pre-

suming to call in question the wisdom of the architect, who fully understands the use which he designs each vessel should be applied to. As this is yielded to, there is no clashing nor jarring, for this might have a tendency totally to destroy that which would be otherwise truly valuable and precious.

And, as regards the Society which we are members of, it was, I believe, established upon the the firm basis of scripture truth, *the light within*. Had it not been so, its founders would never have been able to have endured the bitter and cruel persecution which was inflicted upon them by their enemies, and which nothing but a superhuman power could have supported them under and raised them above, until they were constrained, amidst it all, to sing praises unto Him, whose divine arm of power was underneath them. And as He remains to be the same yesterday, to-day and forever, He will

raise up and qualify those who will not only maintain these principles, but will raise the standard of truth and righteousness yet higher in the view of surrounding nations. Truth is mightier than error, and must prevail; so it is also progressive, and instead of our being as we now are, a hissing and a by-word, there would be a flocking unto us not only from the highways and hedges, but from among those of rank and fortune, whose eyes would be pleased with the beauty of holiness, such as were not only professed but practiced by the followers of that memorable instrument in the hands of his Divine Master, George Fox. These views have been presented to me, I believe, in the light of truth, which can alone reveal them unto man, and which he, with all his high and exalted reasoning powers, can never comprehend, because they are spiritually discerned even by babes and sucklings, those who hunger and thirst after the milk

of the kingdom, which nourisheth up the soul unto immortality and eternal life.

However much and often I have missed my way in my spiritual journey, the sincere desire of my heart is to be found walking in my allotted sphere; for fully convinced I am that I can never bring glory and honor unto His great name by seeking to establish principles and rules of my own contrivance, and which, the more I indulge in, will lead me farther away from the source and centre of all good, which is God. And although one among the weakest of His servants, He has sometimes commissioned me to hand forth to others, either verbally or in epistolary communications, that which He may deem meet for them to have, although it may be by way of reproof, and sometimes by way of instruction or encouragement, to those who are weary and heavy laden, and who feel that they have none in heaven or in all the earth to rest their hopes of salvation upon but

Christ Jesus, "the rock of ages." Unto these the salutation of the spirit through me is, fear not little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Lift up then the hands which are ready to hang down on account of the many deficiencies prevailing among us as a people, remembering, as has been testified, that the prayers of rightly-exercised parents on behalf of their offspring availeth much; so, also, doth those of the parents in the truth, for the preservation and protection of that unto which they may feel bound by the strong ties of deep and fervent love to the Father, and, consequently, to the children, over whom he has, in a measure, placed these as fathers and mothers in the truth, demominated ministers and elders. As I have written nothing but that which seemed to present in the light which we as a people profess, I will close, with the salutation of love.

REBECCA B. THOMPSON.

MILL CREEK, Tenth mo. 23d, 1851.

Dear Friend,—After a season of almost (as I feared) total banishment from the presence of my Heavenly Father, a little speck of light seemed at last to arise, bringing with it the evidence that I must address an absent friend, as way may seem to open in the light of Truth; not feeling myself at liberty to correspond, even with those I truly love, in any other manner, except in way of business; for I have plainly seen, that in my own will and time I can do no good thing, but that the Lord's *time* and *will* is the alone *right time and way*; and if I move not thus, I mar the work he designed me to perform. And as this is my situation, it is, I believe, the condition of others of the human family, dependent as they are upon the same great author for every blessing, and therefore required to render obedience to His dictates, made manifest in the secret of their hearts, and which they can

never correctly understand until there is a willingness, not only to listen to, but also to comply therewith. For as God is a spirit, they who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth, for such he seeketh to worship him. They that seek me shall find me, is one of his declarations to the children of men; and of this class he knows no distinction, but, of "every nation, kindred, tongue and people, they that fear God and work righteousness are accepted of him;" they who fear to offend him, by being disobedient to his inspeaking voice, which cannot be heard in the noise and confusion which abound in the world, or the worldly wisdom of man, but in the silence of all flesh. All the imaginations of the creature must be laid low in the dust before Him, who says, "Keep silence before me, oh! ye isles, and let the people hear my voice, that they may understand my law, that they may write it in their inmost parts." How

plain, then, that there must be a willingness to hear, before much knowledge is gained in divine things. "The sluggard that will not plow by reason of the cold, shall beg in harvest and have nothing;" for if the ground is not prepared for the reception of the seed, how can we expect a crop to be produced and gathered into the garner where it will be protected from the whirlwind and the storm that rages around, scattering as to the forewinds of heaven all that is not founded in the immutable *Truth*? And as all these testimonies are to be gathered from the Scriptures, given forth by the inspiration of *God*, for the instruction of His finite dependent creature man, who is incapable of himself to judge of the things which pertain to the salvation of his immortal soul, he must receive that knowledge solely from God, who formed him in the beginning, and consequently has all power to do with him as may seem good in his sight. And al-

though this brings us into the littleness of self, and prostrates us at his feet, as humble suppliants at the throne of Grace, yet it must be submitted too, for it is “by grace ye are saved if ye are,” and not by any merit of your own; all belongs to God. This, then, my friend, is the foundation upon which the church of Christ is built—the *revealed will of God to man*. For he says, “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Neither shall the combined reasoning powers of man overthrow what He has established in order more fully to show forth His marvellous power, by bringing all into subjection unto Him, whereby all glory and honor is given to His great name. And as this is the principle and object of the formation of our beloved Society, can it be sustained in any other way than the one alluded to? And yet how prone we are to endeavor to keep

it together by doing things in our own wisdom which we should leave undone, and in this way often mar the work. This I have known from a degree of experience, as I feel that I have sometimes missed it in this way, even when the motive was good. Fully convinced I am that it requires strict watchfulness on our parts, lest we step aside from the beaten path. If we should even fear for the safety of the ark, let us not in our own wills put forth a hand to steady it, lest peradventure we retard the performance of that which would build it up by simply allowing His will to rule and reign within us. Feeling, as is often my portion, one of the poorest and weakest of the Father's flock, and that in me dwelleth no good thing, yet the aspirations of my spirit are poured forth unto the Father of spirits that he will condescend to bless my feeble efforts to perform his will even in the littleness; knowing, as I do, that if I am

not faithful in the little, I will not be made ruler over more. "He that is not faithful in the little, shall never be made ruler over more." Let none then despise the day of small things, as it is by little and little we rise or fall; rise in favor with Him, or bring upon ourselves the divine displeasure by disobedience to His command, as manifested in the secret of our hearts. No keener anguish of spirit have I ever known than for unfaithfulness, even in very little things. And if this is the state in which we are placed for the neglect of trivial things, how much greater must be the condemnation of those who slight His internal voice, which has been wooing them to forsake the evil of their ways and come unto Him, until His locks are wet as with the dew of the night, and there is a fearful looking for the judgment; for he has declared His spirit shall not always strive with man, but such as they sow, such shall they reap; if they sow

unto the flesh, they shall of the flesh reap corruption ; but if to the spirit, life everlasting. The salutation of the spirit unto thee through me, a poor weak worm of the dust, is, that thou slight not the day of small things, lest thou fall little by little, until thou comest into the state which I alluded to in the commencement of this letter, even that of total banishment from the presence of thy Heavenly Father. As I have not written this in my own will ; on the contrary, would gladly have been excused, having been under the necessity of neglecting many things which seemed to press heavily upon me ; but I felt that no outward things, however rational and useful they may be, must ever interfere with the performance of that which my Heavenly Father requires at my hands. In that love which is not confined to persons or sect, I remain, thy friend,

REBECCA B. THOMPSON.

During her progress through the spiritual baptism that had then been meted out to her, having had to part with many things upon which her hopes of enjoyment had been centred, and learned through suffering that all terrestrial things are fleeting and uncertain, she came experimentally to realize that all substantial joys, even every blessing with which we are favored, was from the Divine hand ; and as this feeling was cherished, a concern was matured, that when we came to partake of the bounteous supply of that which goes to nourish these poor bodies when assembled at our meals, that the family be all gathered, and a solemn silence be observed, wherein a feeling of gratitude might arise in our minds for these numberless blessings. This concern lived with her to the latest period of her life, and it was often her engagement in these opportunities of silence and waiting openly to

acknowledge these favors, and hand forth a word of exhortation and encouragement.

It was also her practice during several years of the latter part of her life, generally before retiring at night, to sit down in stillness, and, in the quiet, frequently requesting myself, sometimes others of the family, to join her therein, for the purpose (as she would express it) of waiting upon God for the renewal of our strength, that we might look over our past actions with a view to future improvement; and often giving advice peculiarly suited to the occasion.

Having been brought into a state of entire dependence upon, and a sense given her of the great condescension and loving kindness of her Redeemer in meeting with and redeeming her from her low estate, she felt that none need despair of his mercies. She therefore felt constrained, in the love of the Father, to go forth even as to the highways and hedges, that she

might proclaim the glad tidings of the gospel, even to the seemingly most degraded, that there was yet hope for all. Under this feeling, and about this time, she visited many mostly not of our Society; and the remembrance is now vividly before me of the simple but earnest pleadings of this loved one, and the touching and heart-tendering acknowledgments of His unmerited mercies to her, as an incentive to their amendment of life, with the encouraging language, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." As a further evidence of this feeling pervading her mind, and her desire to be found faithful in the performance of his divine requirings, I will give an incident that occurred about this time. While sitting in a meeting at Mill Creek, a stranger in charge of cattle, while passing the house, used language in her hearing that grated harshly on her ear. Her sympathetic feel-

ings went out after him with desires for his improvement, and as the concern matured, she felt drawn to have an opportunity with him; but as none then offered, she returned home; but not feeling excused, a horse and carriage was provided, and she travelled several miles alone, not knowing where she should find him. Having procured an interview, and after relieving her mind of the concern, he acknowledged in broken accents his obligations for her kindness and interest in him; and she returned home with the reward of sweet peace for this little act of dedication. Although favored at times to be the recipient of His love and favor, for acts of obedience, yet, by not keeping sufficiently on the watch, she was at times brought into suffering on account of omissions of little duties, as set forth in the following manuscript:

“Since it was my privilege to mingle with you, my mind has been much exercised

on account of my neglect of a trifling duty, which seemed pointed out for me to perform ; but, letting the reasoner in, I omitted to attend to it. Desiring that all may not be lost, I feel drawn to address you by letter, as matter may seem to present, believing as I do that our Heavenly Father condescends to make use of his creatures as instruments of good or usefulness one unto another, in order to advance his cause in the earth, which is truth and righteousness.

“ After a season of suffering, on account of not fully performing the part which I believe was appointed me, a spark or glimmer of light shone forth, and with it a command to address you by letter, as way should open ; not in my own ability, for I acknowledge little of this for letter writing. Therefore, if any thing valuable is communicated, let all the glory be given to God, who is as able to dictate what to write as

what to speak, either in private opportunities or in the public assemblies of his people. In the love which I feel in the enjoyment of my Heavenly Father, which is in proportion to my obedience to his will, I was drawn to visit you with what I believed to be a message of His love to you, through me, a poor, weak instrument. But finding my way very much closed up, I came away burthened in spirit, on account of my unfaithfulness; yet I believe that he who appoints can open a way, if we let not the reasoner in and conclude it is out of the question to perform our known duty. This reasoner is the grand enemy of our soul's salvation; which destroys the happiness of all who listen to his voice, for it is always in opposition of the will of God; for the voice of God, if strictly followed, raises us above the fear of man. This I have known from a degree of happy experience, as I

have also known deep sorrow occasioned by omissions of known duty.

“For as a parent careth for a child, so doth our Heavenly Father watch over and care for us, the workmanship of His holy hand, and appointeth unto each a work to do, in order that they may work out their own soul’s salvation with fear and trembling before him. He giveth unto each one according to their ability to comprehend. This is beautifully illustrated in the passage, ‘He carrieth the lambs in his bosom, and tenderly tendeth those with young;’ evidencing clearly that his care is extended even to the youngest of his flock—the feeble and the helpless ones. These are nourished and fed by the sincere milk of his word, and they come to know that it alone can support them. That which is of an outward or external character can never nourish up the soul to life and immortality. Those who have tasted of His goodness are con-

strained to bear testimony to, and invite their fellow-travellers, wherever their lot may be cast, to come taste and see that the Lord is good, and a rich rewarder of all those who diligently seek him; for 'they that seek shall find,' and 'unto those who knock it shall be opened,' and 'they shall come in and sup with me and I with them.' They shall enjoy union and communion and sweet fellowship with the Author of their being, and see with indubitable clearness his will concerning them. These, then, are the blessed privileges of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to which all may have access if they will submit to his terms. If any man will be my disciple, he must deny himself, take up his daily cross, and follow me in the way of my leadings; not in his own will, for that would rob God of his glory, which he has testified. He will not give unto another, nor his praise to graven images. Proving beyond a doubt that

man of himself cannot perform acceptable worship unto the great Author and Creator of all ; for it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps aright. He is prone to hew out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water ; such as proceed from Him, the pure and inexhaustible fountain of living waters, and whose crystal streams make glad the whole heritage of God.”

She was at the time referred to, and for several years previous, an almost constant attender of our religious meetings, making many sacrifices, often in much weakness, and under bodily suffering. Her interest in these, and her views on the right ordering thereof, may be gathered from the letters inserted. Although she had a high regard for the Society of which she was a member, yet she was measurably free from that sectarian feeling so much abounding in the world, and so much to be deplored. This

feeling is well depicted in the following manuscript, to wit:—

“From an impression which has attended my mind to write what the spirit may dictate, as being applicable to whomsoever it may seem to be addressed, for in that particular I am at this time blind; therefore, the natural will in me can have no part, having long since seen that of myself I can do no good thing, neither do I believe it possible for any man, as man, to do the works of God. But in order to do this, he must know a coming down into the littleness and lowliness of self, willing to ask counsel and direction of Him; not depending on his own understanding, or that of others, as regards what he may do or leave undone. However high and exalted his reasoning powers may be, they are insufficient to teach him his duty to his God. For no man knoweth the things of God save God and he to whom he revealeth them by his inspeak-

ing word, whispered in the attentive ear of the sincere seeker after spiritual food. The Scriptures of Truth declare 'they that seek me shall find me, and unto those who knock it shall be opened;' showing that there must be a laboring upon our parts for our daily bread, in order that we may be nourished and supported with spiritual food during this state of existence; and thereby be prepared, when done with the perishing things of this world, to enter upon a life of joy unspeakable and full of glory in that which is to come. Thus we may be enabled to adopt the language of that eminent apostle, Paul, 'I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith, and henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness that fadeth not away; and not for me only, but for all those who do likewise.' How much is embraced in these few words, *not for me only*, but for all those who follow me, as I have followed Christ!

This includes all the human family, no matter what their rank or condition in life may be, or to what religious sect they may belong, whether Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Episcopalian, Roman Catholic, or to the humble Orthodox or Hicksite Quaker. If they are only concerned to acknowledge and follow Christ as their holy leader and true guide, as Paul did, they will be enabled to adopt the same glorious language when about to bid adieu to the perishing things of this world. This is the precious privilege of the love of God to his poor finite creature man,—that it does not confine him to any particular creed or any set forms of worship, it only requires true humility and entire dedication of heart; for ‘the humble he teacheth of his ways, and the pure in spirit shall see God.’ They shall know a union and communion of feeling—a sweet fellowship, in which they shall not only feel love to God, but it will

extend to all the workmanship of his hands. 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, that ye have love one for another.' Under the influence of this love, I ask no man to embrace my particular title or sect of religion, for I have no feeling but that of love for any one, however differently they may see from myself; it having been my lot to mingle with different religious professors, where every feeling of 'stand by thyself, I am holier than thou,' was swallowed up in the love which emanates from the Father, and there was a joy and rejoicing together, unknown to the unbaptized in spirit,—they who are trusting in their own strength instead of leaning upon the breast of the beloved of souls."

Her offerings in the ministry were for a time but seldom, and often of but few words, expressed with fear and trembling; neither were they at any time in the "enticing words of man's wisdom," but were few and

savory, accompanied with a vitality that made them generally acceptable to her hearers. In 1853, she was acknowledged to have received a gift in the ministry, which was in the thirty-seventh year of her age. Although she never obtained a minute from her Monthly Meeting to travel in the service of Truth on her own account, yet she several times received the sanction of her friends, by way of minute, to unite with other laborers in the vineyard, when she felt a Gospel call leading her thereto. But her great care and concern, not to engage in such weighty undertakings without the sanction and approval of the great Head of the Church, will be best exemplified by an extract from a letter to a female friend, respecting a proposed religious visit on Truth's account :—

“Feeling, as I believed, the way opened this morning to communicate a few lines to thee, I gladly embrace it, not having

before seen with clearness how to proceed in so weighty an undertaking as was under consideration when I last saw thee; but as I have been willing to leave all with my Heavenly Father, who is not only able to appoint, but also to anoint, I am only desirous of becoming passive in His holy hands, knowing that, unless this is my condition, I can never go forth as an instrument of usefulness. I also know that strict watchfulness is necessary to maintain this position, for the enemy of our soul's salvation is ever on the watch, and if he cannot draw us in one way, he will seek to do so in another. This I have known from a degree of experience. I believe I must for the present endure all that my Father may be pleased to inflict for my further refinement, for He will refine His servants, and make them as pure gold and as polished shafts before they can go forth in His name. This, then, is the situation in

which I am placed ; therefore, I can move no further in the concern, unless a fresh command should proceed from His lips, who doeth all things well. Therefore, let none go forth in His name, unless fully convinced it is His will."

In looking back over the chain that connected her with her paternal ancestry, she would remark, "There is but one link left, and that link was an only and devotedly attached brother." They were often together, and there being a great congeniality of spirit and feeling between them, it is not surprising that upon him should be centred all a sister's love. He being several years younger than herself, of a more robust constitution, with a fair prospect for a longer life, she had looked forward to him as a staff to lean upon in more advanced years ; but in this, too, she was doomed to disappointment, for in the spring of 1852, he, too, was followed to the

grave by this solitary, disconsolate sister. His removal being sudden, the shock on her already shattered nervous system was such, that her life for a time seemed almost poised as in a balance. But in time, a greater degree of resignation was attained to. Her feelings, consequent upon his sudden removal, will be best expressed by an extract from a letter written by her, a few days after this eventful period, to his widow :—

“I am seated for the purpose of penning down what may seem to emanate from the Divine fountain, and without which words fall coldly on the ear of one situated as thou art—lonely, disconsolate and almost broken-hearted; feeling that for thee the world, with all its beauties, has no charms, since he who once so fondly shared them with thee is now numbered with the silent dead; and fain wouldst thou, too, leave this dreary world, to rest beside his loved

remains. But oh! my beloved sister! since it has been the will of Him who is infinite in wisdom and unlimited in power to snatch from thy fond embrace, in an unexpected moment, one thus dearly loved by thee, myself and a numerous circle of friends, who deeply deplore his removal from the scene of action in which they were daily discovering his valuable traits of character, let us remember that all his virtues could not chain him here; but when the mandate of the Infinite Jehovah is pronounced, it must be complied with, and the soul summoned to His bar, there to await His decree, who is a God of justice, love and mercy. These are His attributes; and all who willingly surrender themselves to His disposal, who bow as he did to the Master's will, are the recipients of the joys in store for those who, like the Lamb Immaculate, was led to the slaughter, and there yielded up

his natural and animal life, and thereby was made partaker of a never-ending eternity of bliss beyond the confines of the grave."

From this time forward her health began gradually to improve; and being favored measurably to keep the enemy of her soul's peace under foot, and having received an enlargement of her gift in the ministry, she journeyed forward for a time, filling up, in a good degree, her measure in the line of a Gospel minister. During this portion of her life, she often attended neighboring meetings in Gospel love, and was frequent in her appearances in our own. But for some time prior to 1861, she was mostly silent therein. From that time, she seemed to be released from her bonds, and again came forth in the ministry, to the great satisfaction of her friends, and so continued so long as health permitted her to attend meetings.

Although her path through life may seem to have been a tribulated one, she having had so often to go down into suffering on her own account and for the suffering seed, yet she was permitted, I believe, at times, to experience newness of life, and be made a partaker of those substantial joys which the unbaptized in spirit know not of. And as she became weaned from the world and its entanglements, and experienced more of the smiles of Divine favor, she came to enjoy life (in Christian simplicity) with a greater zest, and greatly enjoyed the society of her friends and neighbors, and loved to mingle much with them in the way of receiving and making social calls or friendly visits, thus manifesting her interest in their welfare, not overlooking those in the humbler walks of life. These were the fruits of a feeling inherent in her nature, which she would sometimes allude to thus: "I live not for

myself alone;" and being liberal in her views and feelings, with much honesty and simplicity of character, caused her to be beloved by many, especially by the young.

In the spring of 1864, our son and only child was attacked with measles, which proved to be of a serious character, during which he was waited on by her with that unremitting attention, such as a mother's solicitude only could prompt, that by the time he began to recover, she became quite indisposed from over-exertion of body and mind, and in this condition she, too, was attacked with the same disease; and, although she suffered but little bodily pain, she soon sank with the progress of the disease, her mind through the whole (except at short intervals) remaining clear and unclouded.

For a more particular account of her last illness, which lasted about two weeks, I refer the reader to some memoranda

written (the most of it) soon after her death, by sister H., (who was her almost constant attendant,) for her own private perusal, which is submitted, as follows:—

“It was my privilege to nurse dear sister R. in her last illness, and thus be an eye and ear witness of the beautiful spirit of resignation to the will of her Heavenly Father, evidenced at different times by expressions that I have felt a desire to preserve from the records of an unretentive memory.

“I think it was on the morning of the 13th, (near a week previous to her decease,) that she first expressed to me doubts of her recovery, and at different times afterward seemed to desire my opinion of her, but I felt it was a delicate matter, in her weak state, to tell her my fears, still hoping they might not be realized. After my going to her on the morning of the 15th, she expressed her sense of her unfaithfulness in

little things, and mentioned one thing in particular, which she said had been before her all night. On my querying if she did not believe we had a good Father that pitieth his erring children, she said, 'Yes, but the work was not done. Oh!' said she, 'if I had only been faithful, how the work would have prospered; but it has been marred upon the wheel.' I told her not to worry about it now, that it was said all things worked together for good to those who loved God; and I hoped she did that. She remarked that it was just such poor sinners as she that he came into the world to save.

"On my feeling flattered with a little improvement the morning but one before her close, I asked her if she did not feel better. She replied she scarcely knew, she felt so weak, and remarked that she did not know that it made any difference whether she got better or not, just as the Master saw meet. He *had* raised up those that were

weaker than she ; but if she was raised, it must be to do her Master's work more perfectly. She said she had felt there was something coming upon her to try her. The language had presented in meeting, 'I will refine thee, but not with silver ;' and then alluded to the afflictions of Job. She afterwards lay unusually quiet, and in the after part of the day, when apparently suffering from great heat, she observed she did not wish to give us so much trouble by throwing off the clothes, thus evincing her patience and submission under suffering. In the early part of the night following, she talked to her husband and son ; to the former she said, 'When I am gone, Cyrus and thee will have to do the best you can without me.' He said he hoped they would be favored to have her with them yet longer. She replied, 'On your accounts, I could desire it ; but it is very doubtful ; yet, if it is the Master's will, he

can yet raise me up and put a new song into my mouth ; and I now feel, if he has a further work for me to do, I shall be more faithful and obedient than I have heretofore been. The cares and pleasures of this world have sometimes been a snare to me, leading me away from a full dependence upon Him.'

“Upon the doctor’s urging several things being done, with the hope of affording relief, she seemed to think it unnecessary, but submitted, saying that she supposed we wanted to do all we could. As the morning approached, we thought her going, and called the family together. She appeared under exercise, often uttering broken sentences, sometimes apparently supplicating her heavenly Father. Once, on bending my ear to hear, she said, ‘The compassionate Jesus stands on the other side.’ And upon my querying, ‘Ready to meet thee?’ she replied, ‘I do not see as I would like ;

I thought last night my way was clear, but since then clouds and thick darkness have intervened; I have leaned too much to the weakness of the flesh.'

“Oh! this was a baptism trying indeed; yet it seemed to me it was not for herself alone, but for some of us who surrounded her, (whose every feeling of nature would have gone out for her relief,) who were thus made to feel the *utter insufficiency* of the creature unassisted by God, the alone true Helper. And for this true help our beloved one seemed singly to seek, except that she once remarked, in speaking of a beloved friend, that we all had our own work to do, but she had thought sometimes we could help each other; and to the same friend she said, ‘If I could only get still enough; cannot thee help me with thy lowly spirit?’ often repeating her desire for stillness; and once added, ‘I think, if I can get still enough, I can see Him after

awhile,' evidencing to me that she felt the supporting arm underneath.

“After this conflict passed away, she was strengthened to give utterance to a last and dying testimony, deeply interesting to those who were privileged to hear it. Looking round on those about her, she observed there was a great many friends to talk to, and she had not long to do it in. She wanted us all to be faithful—that none of us had any too much time to do what we had to do. To her son she gave much good advice, desiring him to consider the importance of setting a good example, particularly for his cousin, and in his choice of a companion for life, that he should seek for one who possessed durable riches—not the riches of this world. She asked for a relative. On his coming to her bedside, she said, ‘I want thee to be faithful, and not be ashamed to own Christ before men.’ A valued friend being

present, she looked at her with a countenance radiant with the spirit, and queried, 'Is it not good to be with the Lord?' To which was responded, 'Yes, dear, and that eternally.' Again she queried of her, 'Think He has forgiven me all my sins?' of which she assured her she had not a doubt."

During the delivery of the above testimony, her anxiety on her own account seemed entirely removed, her concern being for us who stood beside her; but feeling exhausted from the effort to speak, she said, "Now let me rest, though I am not done; (meaning, we supposed, speaking). Her physician then gave her stimulants, with a hope to enable her more fully to relieve her mind, but without effect, as she never after spoke, but lay still and quiet, (evidently conscious till near her close,) with a countenance so expressive as long to be remembered by many of us, and which

we felt to be an index of the peace and quietude within; in this apparently happy frame of mind, she passed quietly away about noon of the 19th day of Third month, 1864, aged about fifty years; and we feel that we have reason to believe that her portion is that of the just of all generations. She was interred on Third-day, the 22d, at Mill Creek, at which time a large and interesting meeting was held.

GEORGE THOMPSON.















